



Threefold Training

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Morality Concentration Wisdom

Threefold Training



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Preface

This book, *Threefold Training*, comes from a talk I shared at the New York Insight Meditation Center in 2012. I chose Three Fold Training from among my many talks because it is a summary of the Noble Eightfold Path—the only path to awakening.

I also added another short article—Investigation of the Dharma—to highlight mindfulness of breathing, which is not only a vehicle to serenity, but to insight.




I thank Brandi Walker for transcribing my talk and Alice Chang for her professional editing. I profusely thank Ben Zhang for his comments and help to make my presentation concise and smooth. Lastly, I thank all readers for giving me a chance to share the beauty of the dharma.

May all of you be well and happy.

Sayalay Susila

10-11-2013





Morality

Concentration




Wisdom

The teachings of the Buddha consist of three trainings: morality, concentration, and wisdom. These three trainings also summarize the Noble Eightfold Path, the only path towards enlightenment. Therefore, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of these three trainings.

Morality Training

The first training is morality training. What is morality training? Morality training is self-restraint. We begin with these five restraints:


1. To abstain from taking the lives of other beings;
2. To abstain from taking what is not given by others;
3. To abstain from sexual misconduct;
4. To abstain from telling lies;
5. To abstain from taking intoxicants or drugs that make the mind confused.




We undertake this self-restraint or morality training based on three considerations. The first is out of compassion for others. A number of women have reported to me that they had been sexually abused when they were children. That unpleasant childhood experience left very painful impressions in their hearts to the extent that they always feel insecure in life. While recollecting their painful childhoods, these innocent victims used to say: “Dad hurts me deeply for the sake of his selfish sexual need.” A lustful man, unable to control his sexual urge, inflicts pain on an innocent child that almost destroys all her happiness in life. Imagine if your beloved child were the victim—how would you feel toward those who do not restrain from sexual misconduct?

If you understand your own feelings—“I do not like to be hurt”—you can understand that the same feelings are shared by all beings who also do not want to be hurt. Then, out of compassion for others, you undertake the above five training rules.


The second reason why we undertake the morality training is because we understand how the law of



karma operates: good begets good, bad begets bad. When we perform any skillful and unskillful action, the result of those actions will inevitably come back to us. Unskillful actions result in two faults—the fault pertaining to the present life and the fault pertaining to the future life. What are the faults pertaining to the present life? One will be imprisoned and undergoes various punishments. One lives in remorse and is reproached by the wise. In the future life, one would be reborn in the plane of misery, in a bad destination, in hell. (AN 2.1)




This is the law of karma. Whether you believe in the law of karma or not, the law will continue to operate in your life. By abstaining from taking life, our lives are protected by the law of karma and we will have long life. Similarly, by not taking what is not given, our property is protected from being stolen. By not telling lies, we are also protected from being cheated by others and others trust us. Why is abstaining from intoxicants skillful? If we take a sip of alcohol, this is fine, but if we indulge in it and take it to excess, we lose our normal consciousness. Without clarity of mind, we perform unskillful actions in a state of confusion. Before being drunk,



we may never think of harming someone. However, when the mind becomes intoxicated and clarity of mind vanishes, we can perform many unskillful actions that harm others without our knowledge. Therefore, indulging in use of intoxicants becomes harmful.



The third consideration is to rid ourselves of the gross defilements, called the transgressing defilements, through physical and verbal actions. Without restraint, the mind remains gross, aggressive, and wild. How can we still our mind, in this case, when we come to concentration training? When the gross defilements are not kept under control in daily life, then training in concentration becomes extremely difficult. This is because unskillful deeds will pop up frequently, resulting in restlessness and remorse. Restlessness and remorse is one of the hindrances that must be overcome before achieving deep concentration.

Therefore, in Asia, we start the path to enlightenment with morality training. However, in the U.S., most start with mindfulness training and then go back to morality training. This is the



difference in how we practice Dharma in Asia and in the West.

When practicing morality training, we receive five blessings:

1. Our health will increase. Not harming others ensures good health, according to the law of karma.
 2. We will have a good reputation because of our trustworthiness. As a result, people will love us.
 3. We will have strong self-confidence and a sense of fearlessness. This self-confidence is very important in a person's life. Many people live in fear of being killed, of being shot on the street, or of losing their job, property, or loved ones. They have no security in the heart. Why is this so? I think it is because they do not keep morality training well. However, a student once told me that she still had a lot of fear although she kept her morality well. This fear is based on self-centeredness. If the morality is undertaken based on love and compassion for others—that is to say, working for the benefit of others more than
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oneself—fear will not take hold. Compassion makes the mind very courageous.

4. We can face the moment of death with peace. Many people fear death and avoid talking about it because they wish to deny it. If we believe in rebirth, then we understand that our morality paves the way to good rebirth. There is nothing to fear at the moment of death. Who knows? The future life may be better than the present life. Death is just casting away the old body and taking up a new body in a new place.
5. We will not be remorseful. Non-remorse is extremely important for concentration training. When morality is impeccable, the mind settles down on the object of concentration easily. Only then can our meditation bear fruit. Morality training is therefore one of the factors for making the immature mind mature for liberation. (AN 9.3)




Concentration Training

The second training is concentration training. Why should we practice concentration training? The majority of people practice concentration to get peace of mind, as our lives are filled with intense restlessness, depression, anxiety, fear, discontent, and distraction. However, in the teachings of the Buddha, obtaining peace of mind is not the sole aim of concentration practice.




Then, why do we practice concentration training? Because the concentrated mind sees things as they really are. This is the main purpose of undertaking concentration. Of course, there are many other benefits, such as having peace of mind, having a good rebirth in the future, and dwelling in happiness in the here and now. The power of concentration also allows you to develop mundane psychic powers, such as the recollection of past lives, the divine eye (clairvoyance), the divine ear (clairaudience), knowing the minds of others, seeing their births and deaths according to their karma, etc. The main purpose of concentration practice, however, is to see things as they really are.


What is this concentration? Concentration is stillness of the mind; in other words, it is the unification of the mind on a single object. When the mind is not unified on a single object, the mind is in a restless state, and a restless mind is powerless and feeble. To see things as they are is impossible. For example, if you take a flickering oil lamp into a dark room, you cannot clearly see what is there because the light is fluctuating. Similarly, if the mind is restless, you cannot clearly see things



as they really are. Or, if you want to see what is at the bottom of a pond, but the water is muddy, you must first let the mud settle to the bottom; only then can you see clearly what is in the pond. The muddy water is likened to the restless mind. In order to achieve a high level of concentration, we must still the lamp or clear the mud, and concentration practice is the only way to do so.



There are many concentration practices for achieving this purpose, such as mindfulness of breathing, the four sublime abidings (loving kindness, compassion, appreciative joy, and equanimity), contemplation of the 32 impure parts of the body, skeleton meditation, and the four elements meditation. These practices are described in the Visuddhimagga, the Path of Purification, which contains forty methods to achieve concentration. However, I would like to recommend mindfulness of breathing, because it is very easy to learn. Also, we are breathing all the time, so this practice is applicable all the time. Even when you are sitting on the toilet, if you pay attention to your breath, this is the practice of mindfulness of breathing.




Mindfulness of Breathing (Ānāpānasati)

Mindfulness of breathing takes the in-and-out breath as an object. Keep the attention under the nostrils where the breath touches without following the breath up into the head or down into the abdomen—doing so causes the mind to move and prevents concentration from developing. Simply stay aware of the natural flow of the breath as it enters and leaves the nostrils and allow the breath to flow naturally, without trying to control it. It is important to practice with a relaxed mind, without strain or expectation.


Avoid focusing strongly—excessive effort causes tension in the nose, forehead, and head, making the practice difficult. The effort needed here is the effort to be constantly aware, to notice, as excess energy inclines naturally towards agitation.

The breath can be long or short. Long or short refers to the duration of time. If it takes a long time to breathe then it is a long breath; if a short time, it is a short breath. You must be aware of long and short of the breath. But try not to expend energy purposely making the breath long or short, or else



you will grow weary. Instead, let the breath happen naturally. The attitude is like that of a person leisurely sitting on the riverbank observing the flow of the river. Whether the river flows swiftly or slowly is not the person's concern. The only concern is to be aware of it continuously.

When you are able to concentrate well on the long and short breath, you will also notice the entire breath from beginning to end. If attention and effort are continuous in this manner, mindfulness will not forget the breath; instead it sinks deeply into the breath continuously.



In the course of practice, the five hindrances of sensual desire, ill will, restlessness and remorse, sloth and torpor, and doubt are sure to arise and block your progress. These five hindrances weaken wisdom and interfere with concentration. One way to deal with them is to replace them with their opposites:

- **Sensual desire** should be replaced with the perception of repulsiveness. For example, a craving for food could be replaced with the thought of




spitting out the food before swallowing; a craving for the opposite sex could be replaced with the contemplation of the impure aspects of the body.

- **Ill-will** should be replaced with the thought of loving-kindness and forgiveness—forgive and wish the one who annoys you to be well and happy. Only a fool allows anger to persist in his mind.

- **Restlessness and remorse** should be replaced with steadying the mind on the breath, or by counting the breath from one to five after the end of each in-and-out breath.


- **Sloth and torpor**, or dullness of the mind, should be replaced with the perception of light. Look at the light and make a mental note: light, light.

- **Doubt** is due to unwise attention. You may be doubtful of your ability to achieve concentration or doubtful of the method of meditation. Doubt can be replaced with faith and confidence through discussion with a competent teacher.




If these antidotes fail, try to *ignore* the hindrances when they arise. Do not pay attention to them. Instead, increase your effort to direct your mind back to the breath. Learning to ignore the hindrances weakens their power to disturb the mind.

Once the hindrances have been done away with, the breath will become smooth, subtle, and the mind will settle well on the breath.



The sign (*nimitta*) may arise at this stage. At first, the sign appears as a gray color, like a puff of smoke, near the nostrils. This is the preparation sign (*parikarma nimitta*). When the sign first appears, most meditators get excited or frightened by this new “extraordinary experience.” As a result of this distraction, the sign disappears.



Just continue to concentrate on the breath. When concentration deepens and strengthens, the sign becomes stable. At this time, the color changes; it whitens and becomes like cotton. This is called the learning sign (*uggaha nimitta*). When the mind remains fixed on the sign of concentration for one

or two hours, it becomes clear, bright, then brilliant, like a crystal or diamond or morning star. This is called the counterpart sign (*patibhāga nimitta*). At this point, let the mind fix on it continuously for one, two, or three hours. Then you will reach *jhāna* (*appanā samadhi*)¹. When concentration is developed, rapture will manifest in many ways, such as a vibration and electric current all over the body, or lightness of the body. Some meditators report that they experience a very pleasant feeling that is superior to the sexual pleasant feeling.

Having experienced a state of peace and happiness—due to a concentrated mind—that is superior to sensual pleasure, you might remove the desire for sensual pleasure which is low and vulgar, and abide with a mind inwardly at peace.

When the mind settles on the breath for a long time, it will become sharp, soft, malleable, and powerful. At that moment, this concentration can be used to see the true nature of the mind and body. In other words, with this concentration, we can direct the mind to wisdom training.

1. For detailed instructions on Mindfulness of Breathing, please refer to my book *Unravelling the Mysteries of Mind and Body through Abhidhamma*, second edition, 2012.



Wisdom Training

When undertaking wisdom training, what is the object of our observation? Whatever arises from the body and mind (the physical and mental aggregates) at this moment. We observe whatever arises as it occurs, remains, and goes away. In other words, we observe impermanence.

Physical (Materiality) Aggregate

What arises from the body? Maybe heat, cold, flowing, stiffness, hardness, tingling, or vibration. All these sensations arise from the body and are characteristics of the four elements. "Body" is only conventional truth. What you are observing, in fact, are these characteristics. In other words, observe the arisen sensations in the body as characteristics of the earth element, the water element, the fire element, and the wind element.

Earth element has hardness and roughness as its characteristic. When you feel what is in the body as hard and rough, understand that this is the earth element. When you feel heat and cold, this is the fire element. When you feel tightness and flowing, this is the water element. Any movement inside the body—up going wind, down going wind, the pumping of the heart, and the in-and-out breath—is the wind element. All of these are characteristics of elements; they are not an abiding self. Practicing thus, the mind establishes itself on the four elements.

With sustained mindfulness, wisdom develops, and allows you to see the changing nature of the four elements. Heat changes. Cold changes. Unpleasant sensations such as roughness and tightness are changing constantly.

By seeing the constant change of the four elements, you also recognize that you do not have the slightest control over the process of change in the four elements. This constant change is oppressive, and the knowledge arises that this oppression is unsatisfactory. It is dukkha. What is subject to change is unsatisfactory, and the process is also beyond your control. This is called non-self in the teaching of the Buddha. So, through observation, wisdom comes to see that this body is impermanent, is a source of suffering, and that there is no abiding self. With a more concentrated mind, you can even see the body break down into millions of particles, arising and ceasing, arising and passing away. You cease to see the body as a solid form. That is, the body has no solidity, only

particles arising and passing away in a state of constant flux. There is no way to stop the natural process of arising and ceasing. This is called seeing things as they really are².

When you see the body as vibrating, arising and passing away, how will you feel about the body? You probably will feel disenchanted. Before seeing the body as it really is, you liked the body and delusively thought that it was permanent and was a source of happiness—you were enchanted by the beauty of the body. But now, through concentration, mindfulness, and insight, you see the body as it really is and you start to lose interest. Instead, disenchantment and dispassion toward the body takes over. When you get disenchanted toward the body, you let go of attachment to it. When there is no attachment, the mind is not agitated, even when the body alters, becomes sick, and ages. Your mind becomes unshakable under all circumstances.

2. For detailed instructions on Mindfulness of Breathing, please refer to my book *Unravelling the Mysteries of Mind and Body* through Abhidhamma, second edition, 2012.

Mental Aggregate

Letting go of clinging to the body is relatively easy. But we still have to let go of clinging to the mental aggregates. Practitioners—especially those who have been practicing for a long time—should not only focus on the body, but also contemplate different mental aggregates such as feeling, perception, and different states of the mind. Not knowing how to contemplate one’s mental aggregates is an imperfection of the practice, because the mind is the forerunner of everything. Bodily and verbal actions are the followers of the commander—the mind. All defilements give rise to suffering and defilements come from the mind. If you are unable to contemplate unwholesome states of the mind, your suffering will never come to an end. So, with wisdom training, apart from contemplating the body, we cannot leave out the mental aggregate as the object of our observations.

The mental aggregates can be divided into four: feeling, perception, fabrications, and consciousness.

I. Feeling Aggregate

In Buddhism, the word feeling is much more specific than the standard English definition, which is synonymous with emotion. There are only three types of feeling: pleasant, unpleasant, and neither pleasant nor unpleasant (neutral). These three types of feeling can be felt either bodily or mentally.

When a pleasant feeling arises and you are not aware of it, what happens? Craving for the pleasant feeling follows. For instance, when a man's eye sees a beautiful girl, he feels very pleasant. If this pleasant feeling is left unchecked, craving will creep in and overwhelm his mind. The girl's beauty will constantly linger in his mind. If he cannot stop the craving, it intensifies and becomes clinging.

Clinging is an intense form of craving. It is a strong mental state of greed, which is an unskillful mental state, or unskillful mental karma. This unskillful mental karma transforms into unskillful physical and verbal karmas. Any physical or verbal karma leaves behind a karmic tendency. This tendency becomes entwined with your mental stream and

will manifest again and again when the conditions are right. You may not see this tendency at any given moment, but when the sense bases meet with desirable sense objects, this latent tendency of greed will rise to the surface and become active. It obsesses the mind, making the mind lose its clarity and peace and become agitated. The only thing that matters at that moment is to satiate the sensual urge. Under the influence of this sensual urge, you perform the physical and verbal action again. As we can see here, one moment of unawareness, of not being mindful of pleasant feelings, has a vicious cycle.

When an unpleasant feeling arises and you are not aware of it, what happens? The latent tendency of aversion will be activated. If you are unaware of its arising, the aversion will spread, causing you to perform bodily and verbal actions. Due to aversion, you make yourself miserable. What's worse, you might even harm another person, as the rage needs to be released.

Therefore, we must train ourselves to be mindful of feelings, whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral.

When the feeling arises, be aware of it and know it. As you are aware of the feeling, pleasant or unpleasant, with sustained mindfulness you also will see that the feeling soon fades away. It is not permanent.

For instance, if you are scolded by your boss, you feel an unpleasant feeling. But then if you are told that the stock market has gone up dramatically, your unpleasant feeling will fade and be taken over by a pleasant feeling. But, will this new pleasant feeling last forever? It will surely not. It soon changes when conditions change. So unpleasant and pleasant feelings are impermanent. If you can observe your feelings closely from morning until night, you will see thousands of feelings arising and passing away. But when you are not mindful, you regard feeling as lasting.

Wisdom allows us to see not only the impermanence of feelings, but their non-self nature. Feeling arises just to perform its function. And what is its function? To feel the desirable and undesirable aspects of an object. What are the objects?

The six sense objects: sight, sound, smell, taste, tangible objects, and mental objects. These six sense objects have their own respective desirable or undesirable aspects. Praise, for example, is a sound. It has a desirable aspect. Abusive words have an undesirable aspect of a sound. Who feels these desirable and undesirable of sound? Feeling *itself*. *Pleasant feeling* feels the desirable aspect of the praise and unpleasant feeling feels undesirable aspect of abuse. If we can understand that only *feeling* feels, then we will not identify feeling as *I*. This is the correct view.

II. Perception Aggregate

The next mental aggregate is perception. *Perception* perceives the special feature of an object and makes a mark to perceive it again "*this is the same*"—in the future. *What one feels, one perceives*. If you feel pleasant every time an agreeable object impinges your six sense bases, you will perceive by making a mark that all agreeable sense objects are pleasant. This perception proliferates to perceive that pleasant feeling is also permanent.

Proliferation continues until you also perceive that it is a permanent I who is perceiving, not understanding that perception is just a mental factor. For example, when you first taste cheesecake, perception perceives it as tasty and delightful. You like it and perception makes an imprint in your mind. The next time you see the cheesecake, perception recognizes the taste and perceives it as delightful, causing greed to arise even before you have actually tasted the cake. In fact, the taste arises and ceases. If you pay close attention while tasting your delightful cake for the second time, you may see that what you previously perceived as delightful does not give you the same satisfaction as before. But why do you still feel the same satisfaction as when you enjoyed this same sensual pleasure previously? Because the old perception, which has imprinted in your mind, has cheated you to perceive "this is the same." Without setting up mindfulness, you enjoy sensual pleasure with a mind that lingers on craving based on an old perception.

With wisdom training, you can directly observe the perception and see the constantly changing nature of it to the extent necessary for insight to dismantle the distorted perception of permanence.

III. Fabrications Aggregate

"And why are they called 'fabrications'? Because they fabricate fabricated things, thus they are called 'fabrications.' What do they fabricate as a fabricated thing?

- For the sake of form-ness, they fabricate form as a fabricated thing.
- For the sake of feeling-ness, they fabricate feeling as a fabricated thing.
- For the sake of perception—hood, they fabricate perception as a fabricated thing.
- For the sake of fabrication—hood, they fabricate fabrication as a fabricated thing.
- For the sake of consciousness—hood, they fabricate consciousness as a fabricated thing.

Because they fabricate fabricated things, they are called fabrications." (SN: 22.79)

The fabrications aggregate is rooted in the latent tendencies of ignorance and craving, and is headed by volition, or intention. Under the influence of ignorance of craving, volition aims at having form, feeling, perception, fabrication and consciousness—or the five aggregates, conventionally known as "self"—so that it is possible to enjoy sensual pleasure. One also aims at continuation of the five aggregates in samsara, the cycle of rebirth.

Not knowing fabricated form as fabricated form—a result dependent on a combination of conditions—one regards form as self; such regarding is a fabrication. Not knowing fabricated feeling, perception, fabrication, and consciousness as fabricated feeling, perception, fabrication and consciousness—a result dependent on a combination of conditions—one regards feeling, perception, fabrication and consciousness as self; such regarding is also a fabrication. When you regard these fabricated five aggregates as self, you

get attached to them. You delight in and desire the five aggregates. Having thus desired, you perform wholesome and unwholesome karmas that seek to have new five aggregates in the future. This is how fabrications fabricate fabricated things—namely, the five aggregates.

To deconstruct fabrications, apply wisdom to discern fabricated form, feeling, perception, fabrication, and consciousness as they actually are—as fabricated form, feeling, perception, fabrication and consciousness, together with their respective causes and conditions—without identifying any of them as an abiding self. When you do not identify them as a self, you deconstruct them. Finding no “self,” your mind loosens its grip on this view.

How do we regard fabrication as self? For instance, when we practice mindfulness of breathing, we might feel that the mind is concentrated. At that moment, the mental state of concentration is arising, performing its function of stilling the mind. Not understanding that concentration is just a fabricated thing—which depends on

internal cleanliness, continuous practice, and the balancing of effort and concentration—we regard concentration as *myself*, and say: “I am concentrating well, my concentration is good.” If we can see concentration as a fabricated mental state arising and ceasing due to conditions, and if we can avoid identifying with it, we deconstruct this fabricated mental state.

If concentration were I or *myself*, it would mean that we could control it all the time. But through our experience, we know that concentration is very unstable—it comes and goes. One time we can sit well and the next time, owing to expectations, that good concentration does not return, leaving the mind agitated. To posit a *self* implies that we can exercise the power of control. We deconstruct fabricated concentration by understanding that it is a conditionally arisen state.

IV. Consciousness Aggregate

The last aggregate is consciousness. Consciousness has the characteristic of knowing an object. There are six types: eye consciousness, ear consciousness, nose consciousness, tongue consciousness, body

consciousness, and mind consciousness. Eye consciousness sees a form. Ear consciousness hears a sound. Nose consciousness smells an odor. Tongue consciousness tastes a flavor. Body consciousness touches a tangible. Mind consciousness knows a mental object.

For example, imagine you are watching television on the sofa while eating some potato chips. At that moment, eye consciousness sees the television program, ear consciousness hears the sound, tongue consciousness tastes the chips, nose consciousness may smell the chips, body consciousness senses the softness of the sofa, and mind consciousness interprets the specific television program.

Because we cannot distinguish each consciousness with its specific function of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, sensing and thinking (due to the rapid succession of consciousnesses), we identify all consciousnesses as one, and this "one" as "I". "I" see, "I" hear, "I" smell, "I" taste, "I" touch, "I" think. Not only do we identify different consciousness

as "I", but different objects of form, sound, smell, taste, tangible, and thought are taken as one, and perceived by ONE MIND. Sense bases, sense objects, and sense consciousness are thus interlinked to form "I"-ness.

For eye consciousness to be fully aware of visible form, some conditioning factors are needed—contact, form, eye sensitivity, light, and attention. The meeting of eye sensitivity, visible form, and eye consciousness is called contact. If we have good eyesight, but do not pay attention to the visible form, then eye consciousness cannot see the form. When there is a visible form, good eye sight, and attention, but no light, still eye consciousness cannot see the form. Only when all these conditioning factors are fulfilled can eye consciousness see the object.

We strongly cling to the false "I". Thus, wisdom training is necessary to train the mind to closely observe each consciousness of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind to understand its function and, ultimately, its impermanent and non-self nature.

Consciousness inclines to take a stance on objects and stand attached to them. "Consciousness, when taking a stance, stands attached to form, stands attached to feeling, to perception, to volitional formations....." (SN: 22.54). Watered with delight, consciousness exhibits growth, increase, and proliferation. When consciousness is thus sustained, five aggregates are built up in future.

As such, when wisdom is developed to see form, feeling, perception, and volitional formation as impermanent, consciousness will not stand attached to them. This is because consciousness cannot stand attached to changing things. When consciousness does not stand attached to form..... the five aggregates will not be built up in the future. When the five aggregates are not built up, aging, sickness and death, grief, pain, lamentation, and despair based on the five aggregates will not arise.

Therefore, it is necessary to undertake wisdom training to understand the body and mind correctly as impermanent, suffering, and non-self. This understanding must be reinforced by

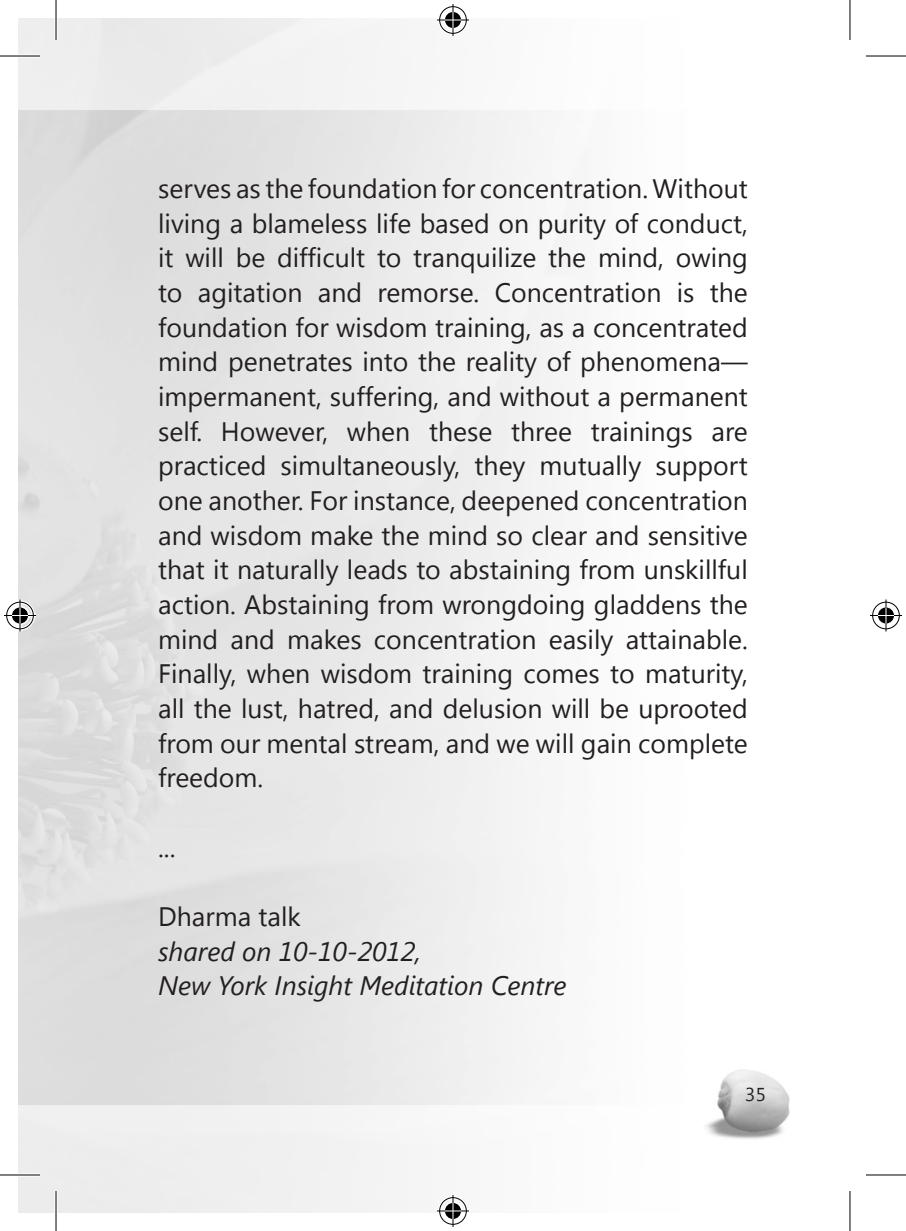
repeated seeing of the three characteristics until you become disenchanted with mind and body. When you become disenchanted, then you are ready to let go of attachment to them. Attachment is the cause of all suffering. When you let go of the cause of suffering, then the effect—suffering—ceases. This is a summary of the practice of wisdom training.

Conclusion

The five aggregates of clinging are the truth of suffering. The craving for and holding on to them are the origin of the truth of suffering. Why do we crave for them? Because ignorance blinds us to their dangers and faults. The removal of craving for the five aggregates is the cessation of suffering. Morality, concentration, and wisdom trainings are the path to remove that very craving by seeing their impermanent, suffering, and non-self nature. Only when the truth of suffering is thoroughly known is the letting go of that craving possible.

The Buddha says in Mahaparinibbana Sutta, *"Great is the gain of concentration when it is fully developed by virtuous conduct. Great is the wisdom when it is fully developed by concentration. Utterly free from the pain of lust, becoming, and ignorance is the mind that is fully developed in wisdom."* (DN: 16)

The teaching of Buddha is a gradual training. The majority fulfills the moral training first, since morality



serves as the foundation for concentration. Without living a blameless life based on purity of conduct, it will be difficult to tranquilize the mind, owing to agitation and remorse. Concentration is the foundation for wisdom training, as a concentrated mind penetrates into the reality of phenomena—impermanent, suffering, and without a permanent self. However, when these three trainings are practiced simultaneously, they mutually support one another. For instance, deepened concentration and wisdom make the mind so clear and sensitive that it naturally leads to abstaining from unskillful action. Abstaining from wrongdoing gladdens the mind and makes concentration easily attainable. Finally, when wisdom training comes to maturity, all the lust, hatred, and delusion will be uprooted from our mental stream, and we will gain complete freedom.

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Dharma talk
shared on 10-10-2012,
New York Insight Meditation Centre



Investigation of the Dharma (*Dharma-vicaya*)

Discerning mental factors (cetasikas)—seeing them one-by-one as non-self—is important in order to remove the perception of self in regards to mental phenomena. In the Anupada Sutta (“One-By-One As They Occur”), the Buddha cited how Venerable Sariputta investigated the mental factors associated with jhāna one-by-one and was able to abandon all the mental defilements through direct knowledge, resulting in his awakening.

The process of repeatedly investigating the five aggregates in the light of Insight Knowledge

The enlightenment factor of investigation, which is the same as wisdom (*pañña*), is indispensable to the practice. Without wisdom, the ignorance which obscures the four noble truths cannot be eradicated.

Mindfulness of breathing, while frequently practiced as a method for developing concentration, can also be used as a path to awakening by serving as an object of investigation. Use mindfulness of breathing to develop a certain degree of concentration, then take the breath as the object of investigation by contemplating the following mental factors:

1. Who knows the breath? *Consciousness.*
2. Who causes the mind to know the touch of the breath on the nostrils? *Contact.*
3. Who feels the pleasantness of the breath?
Feeling.
4. Who perceives the breath as long or short?
Perception.

5. Who directs the mind towards the breath?
Attention.
6. Who does not forget the breath? *Mindfulness.*
7. Who makes the effort to be constantly aware that "This is the breath"? *Effort.*
8. Who repeatedly places the mind on the breath?
Sustained application of mind.
9. Who acts upon the breath and accumulates wholesome karma? *Volition.*
10. Who unifies all the mental factors on the breath? *Concentration.*

Investigate the Mental Factors as Non-Self

Remind yourself: contact, feeling, perception, attention, mindfulness, effort, sustained application of mind, volition, and concentration are not me, not mine, and not myself. They are merely consciousness and mental factors with their respective characteristics. For example, consciousness has the characteristic of knowing an object, feeling feels the pleasantness of the breath, and so on.

Owing to contact—the coming together of breath, body sensitivity, and consciousness—many mental factors come to be, performing their functions and immediately passing away. When you can recognize them one-by-one along with their functions and the causes for their arising, the non-self nature of mental phenomena becomes evident. The perception of “I” dissolves.

Investigate the Mental Factors as Impermanent

As the mental factors arise and pass away while you observe the breath, you further understand that mental factors are impermanent, subject to change and destruction. Seeing impermanence further enhances the insight into the non-self nature of all mental factors.

Investigate the Breath in Terms of Five Aggregates

Investigate further: What is the breath? Upon examination, you will realize that the breath—which is the form aggregate—consists of the four elements of earth, water, fire, and wind, with the wind element as the predominant factor. You should also contemplate:

- The feeling that feels the pleasantness of the breath is the *feeling aggregate*;
- The perception that perceives the breath is the *perception aggregate*;
- The attention, effort, sustained application of mind, mindfulness, and volition are the *volitional formations aggregate*; and
- The consciousness that knows the breath is the *consciousness aggregate*.

Investigate How the Five Aggregates are Subject to Identity View and Clinging

These five aggregates are subject to view. We cling to each aggregate as “myself.” Consider: Don’t we identify the breath as myself, our different feelings as myself, our perception as myself, intentional volition as myself, and consciousness as myself?

The form aggregate—the breath—is a physical phenomenon. Feeling, perception, volitional formations, and consciousness aggregates are mental phenomena. So, all that actually exists is physical and mental phenomena—in other words, mind and matter. Mind and matter are not a self.

These five aggregates are also subject to clinging. We cling to the five aggregates as “mine” with craving. Why do we crave for the five aggregates? Because we delusively think they are the source of our happiness. If we did not have a form aggregate (body), the pleasant feeling arising through sensual enjoyment would be imperceptible. Because we have a form aggregate, we enjoy various sense objects through the sense bases. The pleasant feeling stimulates craving, making the mind enchanted with pleasant feeling.

Investigate the Five Aggregates in Terms of the Four Noble Truths

These five aggregates subject to clinging are the truth of suffering that must be fully known. Without fully knowing their inherent impermanent and suffering nature, it is impossible to let go of the craving for them.

The craving for the five aggregates is the origin of suffering. Craving comes from not knowing correctly the nature of the five aggregates. Because

of not knowing—the characteristic of ignorance—we desire for and hold on to the five aggregates. Nurtured by craving, the five aggregates come to be again and again. When the five aggregates are built up, what follows is the suffering of aging, sickness, death, separation from the beloved, association with the hated, and the inability to get what one desires.

Cessation of suffering is attained by removing the desire and craving for the five aggregates. This can be achieved only by direct knowledge of the three universal characteristics of the five aggregates—impermanence, suffering, and non-self. Thus *the path to the cessation of suffering is to repeatedly contemplate the five aggregates as impermanent, subject to destruction, as an affliction, as a dart, as suffering, as empty, and as non-self*, until the mind gets disenchanting and weary of the five aggregates. Then one lets go of clinging. When there is no clinging, the mind is not agitated; when there is no agitation, the mind arrives at peace. *This is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering.*

Establishing the Appamāda Vihārī Meditation Center

Appamāda Vihārī Meditation Center is located at Balik Pulau, Penang. Construction of the meditation center is in the progress, estimate to be completed by end of 2014. It consist of:

- 2-story multi-purpose building which includes the administrative office, guest room, kitchen, dining hall and dormitory.
- 2-story meditation hall: meditation hall on top, with the lower floor serving as the dormitory.
- teacher's kuti and meeting room.

We are now earnestly seeking donations to fund this project, as it is essential to complete the meditation center as soon as possible. Who wish to contribute the building funds towards Appamāda Vihārī Meditation Center, please bank-in to the following bank account and inform us your name, contact number and the amount by email: sayalaysusilaretreat@gmail.com.

Account Name : Appamada Vihari Meditation Center
Account No : 3177-97-4731
Bank Name : Public Bank Berhad
Address : No 104, 104A & 104B,
Jalan Macalister, 10400 Penang
Swift Code : PBBEMYKL
Remark : Donation for Establishing
Appamada Vihari Meditation Center




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May this good cause of propagating the Buddha
Dharma thereby prolonging the Buddha Sasana.



May all beings share in these merits,
May they free from physical and mental suffering.

Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!



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